

ST EDMUND THE BISHOP, SEDGEFIELD

Sedgefield parish church stands at the east end of the green which lies at the centre of its small rural small market town, its tower forming a prominent local landmark. The church consists of a four-bay aisled nave, west tower, south porch, north and south transepts, and a three-bay chancel with vestry and organ chamber on the north.

DESCRIPTION

The Exterior

The west tower is both lofty and massive; it is built of coursed roughly-squared stone with cut dressings. At the western angles are broad diagonal buttresses rising in a series of steps, and there is a two stage chamfered plinth continued round the buttresses but not the stair turret; there is a set-back above the first stage, and a second just below the belfry, along with a moulded string (mostly renewed) at the base of the parapet. At the east end of the south wall is a rectangular stair turret, of relatively shallow projection; its angle quoins and wall fabric are both of slightly different character to those of the remainder of the tower, and for the first 4 m or so above ground level it has no quoins at all. In addition, the turret has a single chamfered plinth at a lower level to the two running round the remainder of the tower, but at a similar level to that on the south side of the south aisle; the significance of these features will be discussed in the 'structural history' section. The stair turret is lit by a vertical series of small loops, the third simply being a roughly circular hole pierced in a single block. The first set-back is carried round the turret, but c 0.5 m higher than on the adjacent tower wall; the second is continuous round both tower and turret. The turret ends in a sloping roof at a level about half way up the belfry, alongside the belfry opening its outer western angle seems to have been cut back to accommodate the opening, and lacks quoins.

The west window is set just above the upper member of the chamfered plinth; it has three cinquefoil-headed lights with trefoiled sub-lights above, in a frame with a deep casement moulding, under a moulded hood with turned-back ends; its ashlar dressings are of late 19th or early 20th century character.

The first stage of the tower, below the first set-back, has square-headed chamfered windows on north and south, the latter with a projecting stone spout beneath its sill. The second stage (the ringing chamber) has a similar chamfered square window on the west, immediately below the clock face. There is a second clock face at a higher level on the east, immediately above the apex of the nave roof.

The belfry openings are tall openings with three-centred arched heads; steeply-sloping sills and a single broad casement moulding all round. No tracery survives except in the apex of the arch, where there are the heads of four lights (or more likely sub-lights) with uncusped pointed arches. Except on the east these have been recently replaced in new stone, the sub-light arches forming recessed panels rather than actual arches.

The large diagonal buttresses each have a final sloping set-back a little below the level of the embattled parapet, from which spring octagonal turrets; these rise above the main parapet and have their own oversailing embattled parapets enclosing octagonal spirelets. The upper parts of these turrets are of ashlar, but the inner faces, below parapet level, of rough rubble, projecting a little. Hodges' suggested that it had been the intention of the builders to crown the tower with a lantern on four flying arches, as seen at St Nicholas', Newcastle, or St Giles', Edinburgh (1894, 392); there is no clear evidence of this, but the lack of facing on the lower parts of the internal faces of the turrets could be taken as implying something of the sort. The spirelets are clearly of more recent stonework; the north-western bears the incised inscription RESTORED BY W W ROBINSON 1881'. The main parapet has moulded tops to the merlons, and a rubble inner face.

The Nave has a steeply-pitched roof of green Lakeland slate; its only external walling is the eastern gable, above the chancel roof. The upper sections of this are clearly 19th-century work, but older masonry survives below, preserving part of the roof tabling of a former chancel roof, more steeply-pitched than its successor, and springing from a rather low eaves line.

The South Aisle is built of rubble, coursed in places, with many small squarish pieces. There is a chamfered plinth, apparently of sandstone; on the west wall this is set about a metre higher than on the south (and at roughly the same level as the lower member of the tower plinth). The west wall of the aisle has a window of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a five-foiled circle over, under a pointed arch with a moulded hood ending in head stops; the dressings are of tooled pinkish sandstone, and are clearly of 19th-century date. The wall has a 19th-century ashlar coping. At the south-west angle of the aisle is an old stepped diagonal buttress.

The south wall of the aisle has an eaves cornice, apparently of simple chamfered section, although now very weathered. At the west end of the wall is a lancet window, which appears to have originated as the eastern light of a two-light window of mid-13th century character, with a monolithic head and a quatrefoil piercing in the spandrel. About a third of the head survives; it is clear that the west jamb (replacing the original mullion) has been built up in different stonework to the east.

Above the east wall of the south porch is a projecting stone, rather like a sloping set-back from a buttress; a second similar block is set directly above, immediately below the eaves cornice; despite the indications on both Hodges' and the VCH plans, there is now no visible evidence of this buttress (if indeed that is what the blocks indicate) at plinth level. The two windows in this section of wall are both entirely of 19th-century date, and each of two trefoil-headed lights with a foiled panel above, under a hoodmould with carved head stops, with a line of voussoirs adjacent to the extrados of the hood. Between the windows is a stepped buttress that appears medieval. At its east end the aisle plinth looks as if it might have been cut away when the transept was built; the transept has a similar plinth, but c 0.5 m lower in level.

The South Porch has side walls of coursed roughly-squared stone, whilst the south wall is of squared blocks of sandstone. There is no plinth. The outer archway is round-headed, and of a single square order.

The South Transept is of rather different fabric to the adjacent aisle, the wall being almost entirely of coursed Magnesian Limestone rubble, except for around four courses of more regular stonework at the wall head; the parapet, with a hollow-chamfered offset at its base, is of two courses of ashlar blocks, capped by a moulded coping; all this looks of 19th-century date. There is a chamfered plinth, and, at the southern angles, pairs of substantial stepped buttresses.

The south wall of the transept has a window of five acutely-pointed lancet lights with three mouchettes over, under a hollow-chamfered hood; all visible stonework is of 19th-century date. Below the window are three thin courses of infill, suggesting that its predecessor had a slightly-lower sill line^y

The east side of the transept has a pair of three-light windows; each with stepped trefoiled lancet lights, within enclosing arches under chamfered hoods with turned-back ends; their stonework is all recent. To the south of the southern window an irregular break in the masonry presumably indicates the jamb of a predecessor. At the north end of the wall the chamfered plinth of the transept appears to be continuous with that of the chancel, although this is probably the result of a careful matching-up after the transept was built; the transept plinth is formed from longer blocks than that of the adjacent bay of the chancel.

The North Aisle has a chamfered plinth, set at a higher level on the west than on the north. Outside the west end of the aisle is a sunk area, now cobbled, within the foundations of the earlier west end of the aisle, excavated in 1884; the footings of the north wall, the west face of the clasping buttress

at the north-west corner, and the internal face of the west wall are exposed. The west end of the present aisle has 19th-century window of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a quatrefoil over, internally remains of an earlier window are visible (see interior description). Below the chamfered plinth are off set footings.

In the angle between the tower and the west wall of the aisle is a buttress-like feature; this is not mentioned in the various antiquarian accounts, but is of considerable structural significance in that it appears to represent, as the north-west angle of an aisleless nave, the oldest fabric of the church to survive above ground level. The quoining of the angle is of gritstone blocks, substantial but not of a size to necessarily indicate Pre-Conquest work; one has an eroded slot that might be a Lewis hole (which would imply the re-use of Roman material). The blocks appear to have been laid in rough side-alternate fashion, but on the west face have all been cut back to one rough vertical line, as if chiselled away to allow the keying in of an east-west wall, about 0.25 m outside the line of the present north wall of the tower. The sloping head of the 'buttress' has an overhanging coping with a hollow chamfer on its lower angle, quite like the coping of the east gable of the chancel.

The north wall of the aisle is articulated by stepped buttresses into three and a half bays, the half bay being at the west end; the buttresses look as if they may have been reduced in height. At the extreme west end of the wall, close to the diagonal buttress at the north-west corner, the east jamb and turn of the sill of a lancet window are exposed; rather more of this is visible internally. The north door, in the westernmost full bay, has very decayed dressings; it has a broad two-centred arch with chamfered inner and roll-moulded outer orders, a section that seems to have been continued down the jambs; there are remains of impostes which may have been moulded and there is a hood with nutmeg ornament and badly eroded stops. The eastern bays each have 19th-century two-light windows of the same form, externally at least, as those in the south aisle. As in the south aisle there is a chamfered oversailing course or cornice at the wall head, now badly eroded. At its east end, the chamfered plinth of the aisle is c 0.20 m above that of the adjacent transept; as on the south, the aisle wall appears to pre-date that of the transept.

The North Transept has a chamfered plinth, and an old parapet with a hollow-chamfered oversailing course at its base, and a moulded coping. The walling is of roughly-shaped blocks of Magnesian Limestone, generally similar to that of the south transept.

The west wall of the transept has a doorway at its north end (now disused and concealed by a cupboard internally) with a chamfered pointed arch; this appears of 19th-century date. South of it is a window of three stepped lancet lights within a chamfered arch, late 13th-century in style, and apparently genuinely medieval, except for its southern jamb, which, together with an adjacent patch of masonry, appear recent restoration; the patch presumably represents the upper doorway of the gallery stair removed in 1915..

The north wall has a large window of five steeply-pointed trefoiled lights with flowing tracery above, and a chamfered hood with turned back ends; the tracery has been renewed, but the frame is in part old. The coping above has a shallow-pitched gable in the centre, with a broken cross finial.

On the east side of the transept is a window of three tall trefoil-arched lights; its lower parts have been restored, but the head and upper jambs seem medieval. Between the window and the stepped buttress at the north end of the wall three long grey sandstone blocks are built into the wall at c 2, 3.5 and 5 m above the ground, presumably indicating some repair or rebuilding.

The low-pitched roof of the transept is covered with lead; on the western slope is an inscription (visible only from the tower!) relating to the 1915 restoration.

The south wall of the Chancel has a chamfered plinth and also a string course, varying in level, which has equal chamfers to upper and lower angles. The wall is divided into three irregular bays (the western considerably shorter than the other two) by stepped buttresses that have horizontal roll

mouldings where the sloping top meets the wall face. The plinth extends round the buttresses, but the string does not. The wall is of roughly-coursed and squared rubble and small stone; its upper section, above the buttresses, is slightly more regular and has probably been rebuilt. Antiquarian accounts (eg Hodges 1894, 390) refer to the external wall faces of the chancel being 'plastered', and make no mention of the complex structural features now visible; these would appear to have only been exposed since re-pointing work that probably took place in the 1960s.

In the western bay the string is only c 1.0 m above the plinth; at its west end is an odd little gap between string and transept wall, of c 0.15 m. The bay is instructive in displaying evidence of windows of three different dates. Above the string the chamfered jamb, and end of the sill, of a window of the earliest phase are visible close to the west end of the wall; east of this, at a higher level, is a two-light window of late 19th or early 20th century date, with trefoiled lights and a quatrefoil in the head, under a moulded hood with turned-back ends; above this window is a patch of what is clearly infill, up to an elliptical brick relieving arch, which might either relate to the present window, or more likely its late 18th or earlier-19th century predecessor represented by its sill and lower jambs, below the present sill; this middle-phase window was of roughly the same width as its successor but displaced a little to the west. The present window is set close to the first of the stepped buttresses, the cap of which seems to have been cut back to accommodate its hoodmould stop (or perhaps the hoodmould of a predecessor?). Sandwiched between the east jamb of the window and the west face of the buttress (and possibly pre-dating the buttress?) are the remains of the east jamb and sill of another 'early' window similar to that at the west end of the bay; it is conceivable that these remains are of east and west jambs of a single large window, but more complete remains of windows (with jambs of the same character) in the other bays makes it more likely that we are looking at evidence of two separate single-light openings.

The central bay is similarly complex. Here the string course is set c 1.5 m above the plinth, and is interrupted by a column of rebuilt masonry containing a priest's door that has a round-headed arch with a raised stone surround with a narrow chamfer, its tooling suggesting a late-18th or 19th century date. Above the string course an irregular joint near the west end of the bay may indicate a previous window jamb; over the doorway is another relatively recent two-light window of precisely the same type as in the western bay, with its relieving arch above; to the east of the doorway is the lower part of an earlier blocked window, its jambs of the same character as those in the western bay. Here both jambs survive, showing that the opening was narrow and tall, and was presumably a lancet.

In the eastern bay, the string steps up to a high level again, to clear the head of an earlier priest's door with a two-centred arch and a continuous chamfer, now blocked; over the door, and directly above the string is the lower part of another early window. In the centre of the bay is a third two-light window; beneath its sill the string steps vertically down (the vertical section being cut back) to continue at the same level as in the centre bay, as far as the angle buttresses.

Both eastern angles of the chancel have a pair of stepped buttresses with gabled tops; immediately above these each side wall has ended in a corbelled-out pilaster-like feature, the foot of an earlier east gable. This only remains intact on the north (the gable has been further heightened, but the footstone of the earlier coping survives); on the south only the projecting block at the base of the feature remains.

The plinth and string course are continued across the east end, although the walling between them is of quite different character to that in the side walls, having many more larger and more elongate roughly-shaped blocks. In the centre of the wall is a buttress that now only rises to the level of the string, where it is topped by a 19th-century moulded block. On either side of the buttress the ends of the string seem to be mitred, as if to return around the buttress. Above the string is the great five-light east window, with a roughly four-centred arch. The lights are trefoiled, with flowing tracery

above; all the tracery is recent restoration. The outer surround is of very unusual section, with a chamfer inside a shallow square-edged sunk panel or groove; it does not look convincingly medieval, although badly decayed and clearly of some age. There is a chamfered hood; hood and window head are heavily patched with cement. The present gable, of relatively shallow pitch, has an old weathered coping (hollow-chamfered beneath), except for the finial block with its foliate cross which are clearly restoration.

Prior to the construction of the vestry and organ chamber in the early 20th century, the north wall of the chancel was divided into three bays, on this more or less equal in length, by stepped buttresses. Only the eastern bay of the wall is now exposed to the east of the additions. Here the string is again present, with above it a fourth two-light window of the same type as those on the south; directly beneath it the lower jambs, sill and stub of central mullion of a predecessor are partially exposed (and partly hidden by the addition). The wall below the string is of roughly-coursed quite small blocks; there appears to be a ragged joint just short of the angle buttress.

Above the vestry roof the upper half of the eastern of the two buttresses is seen, with a roll-moulded top like those on the south; further west the brick relieving arch above the former central window is visible above the organ chamber roof.

The Vestry and Organ Chamber are of 1912, and are built of snecked tooled stone with tooled ashlar quoins dressings. There is a chamfered plinth. The vestry has a window of three trefoiled stepped ogee-headed lights in its east gable; on the north is a projecting gable with a shoulder-arched doorway and a window of four stepped lights, with a two-light window to the boiler house below. The organ chamber has a taller but shallower-pitched gable to the north, with a square-headed two-light mullioned window with a hollow-chamfered surround, and a lower projecting section containing another two-light mullioned window and a chamfered square-headed doorway on its west side.

The Interior

The interior of the church is plastered and whitewashed, except for exposed dressings of sandstone ashlar. The arch to the Tower is of four-centred, almost Tudor form, and of two orders; the inner has a deep casement moulding, whilst the outer is simply hollow-chamfered. There are no imposts, the head mouldings simply stopping above the jamb, which has a single broad hollow chamfer. The internal face of the stair turret is flush with the inner face of the south jamb; the turret is entered by a four-centred doorway with a continuous chamfer. The internal north-western angle of the stair projection has a vertical roll-moulding of 13th-century type. The internal walls of the tower have scars high up suggesting that a quadripartite vault has been removed, springing from corbels (still extant, but somewhat inaccessible) high in the angles. The west window has a low segmental rear arch, all plastered.

The internal walls of the lower section of the newel stair are of good-quality squared stone, the individual blocks all being worked to a curve; the upper section has rendered walls apparently of rubble. The first stage chamber opens from the stair by a square-headed doorway with quite a broad chamfer; inside the doorway four modern steps lead down to the chamber floor, one of the beams of which actually projects through the wall of the newel stair. The walls of the chamber are largely plastered. The north and south windows have segmental rear arches; beneath the former a ragged patch of walling projects c 0.10 m in front of the remainder, its outline reminiscent of the top of a Gothic arch; this is clearly a section of the original wall face left standing proud when the vault was cut away, how the levels of the doorway and two windows relate to that of the vault is not clear. The inner face of the stair turret is corbelled out on two chamfered courses a little above the present floor level. The ceiling of the chamber is of recent timbers, supported by three metal girders.

A similar doorway from the stair gives access to the Ringing Chamber; there is a panelled dado and the walls are all plastered. The window in the west wall has a segmental rear arch; in the centre of the east wall is a similar recess that would appear to have been a window, now opening beneath the line of the nave roof.

The stair ends at belfry level, with a third similar doorway, in this case the dressings of the west jamb of the door, outside its chamfer, are carefully worked to a curve of tighter radius than the present curve of the stair well at this level, suggesting that the well has been enlarged. The stair well is capped by a series of eroding slabs, including one important medieval grave cover (see sepulchral monuments section).

The internal walls of the belfry carry remains of plaster, there appear to be irregular breaks between the surrounds of the belfry openings and the adjacent walling; some distance above each opening is a rough relieving arch, that on the north set noticeably off centre from the opening beneath. A recent concrete ring beam has been inserted at floor level. There are ranges of large sockets at two levels in the north and south walls, two of those in the upper series now carrying recent beams. The roof of the tower is carried by two cambered tie-beams, set north-south, with a square-set ridge and one purlin on each slope; access to the tower top is by a recent trapdoor on the south.

High in the angles of the west wall of the nave above the tower arch are two irregular projections, carrying the bases of the eastern diagonal buttresses of the tower; there are also faint hints of an earlier roof line, springing from the tops of the present nave walls.

The arcades of the Nave are of three bays, separated from the transept arches by short blocks of solid wall; they are of considerable architectural importance. The piers are each of quatrefoil plan, one shaft facing each cardinal point; the responds all have single attached shafts; piers and responds all have moulded bases standing on square plinths, moulded rings at mid-height, and 'the most sumptuous stiff leaf capitals' (Pevnsner & Williamson, 402), which retaining some remains of medieval pigment.

The western respond of the south arcade has a roll-moulding on its south-east angle, although this has been partly overbuilt by the later west wall of the aisle; its capital is badly eroded, but grotesque masks survive on either side, that on the left (south) forming a capital to the roll-moulding. The north-eastern angle is rather disturbed, as if some projection here has been cut away. The capital of the western pier of the arcade has fine pendant foliage cut in three dimensions, somewhat damaged; that of the eastern is more elaborate with foliage and various beasts (including a pair of birds on the west which share one head). The eastern respond is very similar to the western, with a pair of grotesque masks.

The western respond of the north arcade has quite an elaborate capital with beasts, grotesque masks and foliage, all rather weathered. On the inner (south) side is evidence of cut-back masonry, projecting flush with the face of the respond, as on the corresponding respond of the south arcade. The western pier has a capital with stylised foliage, somewhat damaged; the eastern has the finest of all the capitals, with foliage, interlaced beasts, and, facing south-west, a laughing male and smiling female head; these are so well preserved that one suspects that they may have been re-worked but this may not be the case. The eastern respond has a badly-damaged capital, between grotesque heads of beasts.

The arches of the arcades are all of two-centred form; towards the nave are two orders, the inner with a pair of roll mouldings with a hollow between, and the outer with a single large roll moulding; above these is a hoodmould (quite badly decayed) with nutmeg ornament, ending in mask stops about a metre above the arcade capitals. Towards the aisle the arches are simply of two chamfered orders, without any hood.

The block of solid walling at the east end of the south arcade is 0.60 m long, as opposed to that **on the north, which is** only 0.45 m. The vertical angles of both blocks are chamfered, except the south-western of the southern, which has a roll moulding. At the east end of these blocks the arches to the transept spring from responds that have attached shafts like those of the arcade responds, but rather larger in diameter (0.27 m as opposed to 0.21 m), and with moulded rather than carved capitals, their impostes set a little higher than those of the arcade. The eastern responds of the arches are similar except that their capitals have their mouldings continued to adjacent capitals to shafts of smaller diameter (now removed) which flanked the chancel arch. The eastern respond of the north transept arch has its mid-height ring badly worn, and its base concealed by later woodwork.

The foot of the western respond of the south transept arch is of especial interest, in that the present simple moulded base of the attached shaft has been cut down into what looks like an earlier respond base; this is partly boxed in by the pewing, but it has a simple chamfer stop at its south-west corner. The corresponding base on the north has been renewed. V

The arches to the transepts themselves are of similar form to those of the arcades, except that the roll mouldings are all keeled, and their hoodmoulds do not have the nutmeg decoration.

The outer face of each of these blocks of walling has in addition an attached shaft from which springs a further arch spanning the east end of each aisle. The arch opening into the south transept is distinctly assymetric, its northern respond being c 0.8 m higher in level than the southern; both responds have the usual shaft rings and moulded capitals. The arch has two chamfered orders to the aisle, but towards the transept the inner order is chamfered and the outer moulded with a large keeled roll, under a chamfered hood. Both outer order and hood terminate with rather contrived stops against the masonry of the eastern arch of the arcade, showing that the arch post-dates the arcade pier.

On the north the corresponding arch is of similar section but rather different in shape. Its responds are set at the level but the arch itself has a short vertical section above the inner respond, but is otherwise of segmental-pointed form. The masonry of this arch is clearly built up over the broach stop at the top of the north-eastern angle of the block of walling; this arch respond has a very fat roll at mid-height, differing in character from the adjacent transept arch respond which has a more slender moulded ring.

Both these arches are set distinctly skew to the nave walls, perhaps through some error in laying out.

The internal face of the west wall of the South Aisle is set a little forward of the face of the earlier arcade respond; high up in the north-west angle of the aisle is a corbelled-out projection carrying the base of the angle buttress of the tower. The west window of the aisle has a two-centred chamfered rear arch, like all the others to the aisle windows behind plaster. The lancet west of the porch has a straight internal lintel, chamfered. The south door, now opening inside the porch, has a broad slightly-pointed arch, whitewashed over, with a single continuous chamfer; its rear arch (with exposed dressings) is of segmental form, with an infilled drawbar tunnel in the internal eastern jamb. The two south windows east of the doorway have segmental-pointed rear arches with chamfers.

At the west end of the North Aisle is a window with a two-centred chamfered rear arch; its internal south jamb is plastered, but its north jamb has exposed stonework; the chamfer of the window rear arch is continued for some distance down the jamb, which is very worn; most of the rear arch and exposed jamb look to be medieval fabric.

At the extreme west end of the north wall is the eastern roll-moulded jamb, and beginning of the curved head, of the rear arch of what was probably a lancet window. Then comes the north door, which has plain square jambs and a chamfered segmental rear arch; there appears to be a drawbar tunnel (infilled with wood) in the east jamb. The two windows in the eastern part of the wall have trefoiled rear arches with a hollow chamfer to the head but none to the jambs. Rear arches and outer jambs are of 19th-century ashlar, but there is rougher stonework within them; this roughness may simply reflect the intent to plaster, rather than the survival of earlier fabric.

At the base of the south wall of the South Transept are a pair of segmental-pointed, almost triangular, tomb recesses; each has a chamfered arch and a simply-moulded hood, containing effigies (see sepulchral monuments section); above the recesses is a chamfered set-back of c 0.15 m, below the south window which has a segmental rear arch; its exposed dressings are all 19th century. 1-lodges (1894, 390, footnote 14) calls the recesses 'new'; at first glance they look medieval work, but this may simply be due to relatively recent decay of the stonework.

There are a number of interesting features on the east of the transept; the two large windows have segmental-pointed rear arches, with chamfered heads; their exposed dressings are all Victorian ashlar, now decaying quite badly. Between the two windows are a small piscina that has a simple two-centred arch with a broad chamfer, and retains the inner half of a fluted bowl, and a rectangular aumbry with a cut-out, probably for a lock, on its north jamb. At the south end of the wall is a larger piscina, now very decayed; it has a trefoiled chamfered arch, but only retains traces of its bowl. Hodges' (1894, 389) refers to two image brackets, probably coeval with the transept, which 'the late rector' had ordered to be cut away; the piscinae and aumbry had been infilled and plastered over at the same time, but were later re-opened.

The North Transept has a panelled dado. The window at the north end of the east wall has a segmental-pointed rear arch, with a chamfered head; most of its stonework is ancient. A similar window to the south has been converted into an opening to the organ chamber and vestry, by the removal of its sill; its rear arch seems old. Between the two windows is a small round-arched recess which may have been a piscina; the head, cut in a yellowish stone, has a chamfer, and might possibly be a re-used 12th-century window head.

The large window at the north end of the transept has a slightly-distorted segmental-pointed rear arch with a chamfer to its head; the stonework of its internal surround seems old, with the exception of the sill. The internal surround of the window on the west of the transept is also largely old; its head is of slightly shouldered form, with a chamfered pointed rear arch.

On the wall is a plaque stating 'this transept was restored by Gustavus William, Ninth Viscount Boyne, A.D.1915'.

The Chancel is entered under an arch of rather distorted pointed form; its inner order has been cut away (presumably when the 17th-century chancel screen was introduced), the surviving outer order having a large roll moulding and a rather battered hoodmould with nutmeg towards the nave, and a chamfer towards the chancel. The arch now springs from a plain plastered wall, any impostes having been cut away, except for the capitals of the shafts that flanked the west side of the arch, already described (see the description of the arcades).

Towards the nave there are four large corbels set directly above the hoodmould, two about 1.5 m above its springing, and the other two on either side of the apex. The lower two are masks, and the upper two plainer.

The chancel walls are covered by panelling to a height of c 2.4 m, obscuring any ancient ritual features. The three twolight windows on the south have segmental-pointed and chamfered rear arches behind plaster; the exposed ashlar of their inner frames is all relatively recent. The internal frame of the east window is older; its arch is of segmental-pointed form, with a hollow chamfer to the arch but not the jamb; there is an internal hood, very decayed, partly obstructed by the present roof timbers (the ridge actually overlaps the rear arch itself). The single window at the east end of the north wall is precisely similar to the three on the south.

At the west end of the wall is an early-20th century arch to the organ chamber, largely concealed by the organ itself; it has a large wave moulding.

The Organ Chamber and Vestry are now entered from the north transept, from which a passage behind the organ leads to a segmental-arched doorway, with a chamfered surround, opening into the vestry itself. This has boarded wagon ceilings, and a brattished tie-beam between the two different sections (the main north-south roof and a separate part to the east). Both the north and the east windows have segmental-pointed rear arches with chamfered heads.

The Roofs

The roof of the nave is of very steep pitch, and is four bays, corresponding with the arcades below. It has large collarbeam trusses with cusped arch braces and intersecting scissor-braces above, springing from moulded stone corbels; all this is plainly Victorian work. The roofs of both aisles, with short wall-posts on corbels, and flimsy arch braces, are also Victorian, as is the diagonally-boarded ceiling of the south transept. Only the roof of the north transept is older; this is in five bays, with quite steeply cranked tie-beams, only roughly shaped, with chamfers. These are supported by quite large roughly-shaped corbels; they carry a ridge and one purlin on each slope. Each bay has two substantial rafters, which are also supported at the walls, by smaller corbels. There are further roughly-shaped corbels supporting the ends of the longitudinal timbers where these join the north and south end walls; there are even additional corbels at the south end to provide some support for the rafter adjacent to the wall face.

7

The shallow-pitched chancel roof is of seven bays, having arch-braced trusses, with boarded infill above the tie-beams and trefoiled piercings in the spandrels of the braces, springing from moulded corbels; there is a moulded ridge and one purlin on each slope.

FITTINGS & FURNISHINGS

The Font stands at the west end of the south aisle; it is described and illustrated by Hodgson (1912, 215-6). The octagonal step, base and shaft are there identified as being of Tees marble (the step actually looks more like Frosterley 'marble'; base and shaft are a greyer stone), and the bowl of grey Italian marble. The fluted bowl, with a coat of arms on each face, is said to have been presented by rector Theophilus Pickering (1705-1711); his arms occur, along with those of five other contemporary families; also included are the older arms of Hoton and Thornton, suggesting that the bowl was either copied, or even re-cut, from an earlier one. The bowl does have cuts for fittings (ie a cover) which could be taken as evidence for a Pre-Reformation date. The plinth or lower step carrying the font is of sandstone, and looks of 19th century date.

There are five Bells; the fifth may be coeval with the tower, whilst the other four are by the York bell founder Samuel Smith. The inscriptions are:

(1) 'Cantate domino canticum novum'

(2) 'Laudate dominum cymbalis sonoris'

(3) 'Theophilvs Pickering D.D. rector. Te Devm Lavdamus 1707. Bryan Hamson, Martin Dunn, Thomas Smith, Richard Smith, Churchwardens'

(4) Nathaniel Lord Crewe Lord Bishop of Dvrham
1707. Anno feriae et mercatus maximae villae de Sedgefeild restorationis' •

'+Trinitate Sacra Fiat Hec Campana Beata' (accompanied by the arms of Thornton and Rodes'; it has been suggested that the tower was paid for by Roger Thornton, d.1483)

The Bellframes, probably of 1707, are of pegged oak construction, and of long-headed type with straight braces from sill to head (type 6a); they are constructed to take six bells (plan type 6.8) but the southernmost pit never appears to have been occupied (for classification see Pickford 1993)

The Church Clock was installed in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; the mechanism, in the Ringing Chamber, bears a plaque 'W POTTER & SONS LEEDS 1897'.; an earlier clock was installed c 1741 (church guide)

The Chancel Woodwork, largely of the 1630s, is of considerable importance, 'matched only by Cosin's work at Brancepeth, and of course at Durham and Bishop Auckland' (Pevsner & Williamson, 1983, 403). The rood screen shows an eclectic mixture of styles in which an incised lozenge pattern has clearly been inspired by the Romanesque nave piers in Durham Cathedral; the canopied loft is basically Gothic, although here and elsewhere the real date is betrayed by the presence of strapwork and rustication. The same mixture of influences is seen in the choir stalls, and in the altar reredos. The panelling of the chancel walls is probably rather later, and has been linked to the rectorship of Dennis Granville (1667-1691), son-in-law to Bishop Cosin.

The Organ was donated by the Rev. Theophilus Pickering in 1707; its carved front is fully Classical, in contrast to the earlier chancel furnishings. Between 1870 and 1914 it stood at the north-west corner of the nave (church guide).

There is relatively little Stained Glass in the church; none of the medieval pieces recorded by antiquarian sources survive. There are two Victorian windows in the north aisle, and one (dated 1863) in the south; the south window of the south transept is dated 1875..

Altar Slab. On the internal sill of the west window of the north transept is a slab with two of its lower edges chamfered, identified as 'St Catherine's Chapel altar slab discovered during the restoration A.D.1915'.

In the aisles and south transept are wall-mounted Oil Lamps (late 19th or early 20th century?), on ornamental brass brackets.

Lying loose on the floor at the south-east corner of the south transept is a roughly-cut stone with a deep bowl, with a drain, cut into it; this might possibly have been part of a medieval stoup.

Three old Benefactions Boards, in a very faded condition, currently lie in the first stage chamber in the tower.

SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

The church preserves a number of medieval monuments, the condition of some of which gives some cause for concern:

Two medieval Effigies lie in the tomb recesses in the south wall of the south transept; they are thought to date from c 1300, and represent benefactors; the male effigy is so worn as to be unrecognisable, but the female is better preserved (although in active decay; see 'recommendations'). Boyle (1892, 642) dates this effigy to the last quarter of the 14th century.

Four Cross Slabs (three within the church; for the fourth see 'churchyard' section) are known, and are described and illustrated by Ryder (1985, 112-113, plate 49):

On the north side of the chancel is an important late 13th-century slab, bearing an inscription to Andrew Stanley, first master of Greatham Hospital (and, it has been suggested, builder of the chancel) along with a cross with a chalice on the shaft and the Agnus Dei at the base; the design appears to have been inlaid in brass, now removed. Hodges (1894, p.XXXVII) gives a drawing. Unfortunately this stone is now almost completely concealed by a larger fixed heater on top of it; the condition of the surface of the monument beneath the stone is not known, but may have suffered damage.

An elaborate cross slab with a cross formed from naturalistic oak leaves, which also bears a sword and the arms of Fulford, has been re-used as one of the slabs forming the top of the newel stair, within the belfry; it can best be inspected by stepping up onto the bellframes. It is in a poor and decaying state (see recommendations section).

Part of an incised 13th-century slab forms the 33rd tread from the base of the newel stair. Hodges (op.cit) illustrates this, along with another similar slab 'in the tower' which cannot now be located.

There are also several medieval and sub-medieval Brasses:

At the east end of the nave, just south of the pulpit, are a pair of slabs: the northern is a rather battered slab with indents of a brass figure, an inscription, a shield and the emblems of the evangelists at the corners.

(2) The southern has brasses with an inscription to William Hoton d.1445 (Boyle 1892, 643) and a helmet with mantling and crest.

On the south wall of the south aisle, mounted in a wall case: Brass of a kneeling lady, with two coats of arms. An accompanying plaque identifies it as of c 1310, and the shields as of Stephen de Bastingburne and Walter de L'Isle. The brass had formerly been in the floor of the south transept; it was stolen from the church in 1969 and recovered in 1973; remounted in its present position in 1982.

(4) On the north wall of the north aisle, to the east of the north door, remounted on a wooden plaque: Inscription to Thomas Dyke d.1464 and Bartholomew Harbottle d.1474 (Boyle 1892, 643)

On the north wall of the north aisle, at its east end: A pair of brasses showing skeletons, presumably of a husband and wife, wrapped in shrouds. These are thought to be of 17th century date; Hutchinson gives a woodcut showing these set in a slab with indents for a shield, inscribed panel, and border.

There are a number of post-medieval monuments of some interest. Below the altar steps there are two large ledger stones against the south wall with coats of arms, dated 1667 and 1679; on the north, alongside the medieval slab to Andrew Stanley are a slab to the rector Jacob Clayton, d.1705, with a small brass plate, and a 1703 ledger, with arms.

There are also a number of 18th and 19th century wall monuments in the chancel, including on the north tablets to Anne Spearman, d.1821 (with a grieving female figure and coats of arms) and Mary Anne Spearman, d.1777, and on the south Rev. Theophilus Pickering d.1710 (donor of the font and organ) and Catherine Vane d.1733.

Historical Notes

900-915 During the episcopate of Cutheard 'Ceddesfeld' was purchased for the Cuthbert Community.

1085 Ulchild is referred to as rector.

10

c1240 Hodges (1894, 383-5) argues that the nave arcades at Sedgefield were built by the same architect, Richard of Farnham, who designed the Chapel of the Nine Altars at Durham Cathedral.

1794 The historian Hutchinson (III, 50-58) gives the earliest detailed description of the building:

'The church of Sedgefield is in the form of a cross; the tower lofty, and ornamented with hexagonal turrets, bearing short spires, and rising from, the corner buttresses. It stands on the east side of the square; the decent into it is by several steps; the length, from tower to the screen of the chancel, is above seventy-two feet, neatly stilled, and divided by two regular side ailes; the length of the transept is nearly equal to that of the nave. The ailes are formed by rows of three pillars, light and elegantly formed, each pillar being composed of four perfect cylinders, not placed in a square, but in a lozenge, east and west, so as to present a broad front towards the centre of the nave; the columns are belted in the middle, which greatly hurts their beauty; the bases have few members, and those of the old Saxon order, but the capitals are variously ornamented with fillets of palm branches, vine leaves, wreaths of flowers mingled with birds, and other figures, in many parts delicately pierced. The arches are pointed and ornamented with mouldings, the outward one zigzag; they spring from pilasters on the side walls, and rise from grotesque heads on the capitals of the pillars. The pulpit is fixed by the first south pillar, and the reading-desk opposite. The nave is lighted by two modern windows in each side aile, and three on each side of the superstructure of the centre. There is a good organ at the west end, with a clock in front, which conceals the organist's seat; all neatly ornamented. The font is large black marble bason, of an octagonal form; each front richly sculptured with arms (footnote: Hoton, Hebborne, Elstobb, Lambton, Pickerin g), and fluted. The roof of the nave

is oak. The south end of the transept is kept as a vestry room, inclosed by a low screen of wood; it is lighted by a large window to the south, and two side windows to the east, under pointed arches; the north end of the transept is lighted in the like manner, and built up with a gallery belonging to John Burdon, esq; of Hardwick. This was anciently called St Catharine's porch, chapel or vault. The chancel is inclosed from the nave by a rich screen of tabernacle work in oak, with three stalls on each side, divided by beautiful light columns, and covered with canopies. The chancel is near 36 feet in length, to the four steps with rise to the communion-table; the space within the rails is large and commodious. The whole chancel is wainscotted with oak, in panelled work, about eight feet high, ornamented with cherubs; and there are seven handsome stalls on each side. It is ceiled with stucco work, and lighted by a large window to the east, and two on each side, under pointed arches. In the center of the east window are the arms of the See of Durham in painted glass, impaled with lord Crew's; below, on the dexter side of the window, the arms of the See single; sinister, those of Tunstall. The transepts do not appear to have been part of the original building but to have been added thereto at separate times, the one on the foundations of St Catharine's chantry. and the other of St Thomas's; or for a guild, which was instituted there.... (description of monuments omitted)

1823 Surtees (III, 26 et seq) gives a description largely following that of Hutchinson, but includes a description of a window on the east of the south transept which retained some medieval glass including the inscription '....DE HENLEE RECTOR ECCLES FECITFENESTRAM'. He states that the north transept was 'long used as a burial place for the Hotons and Freviles'.

1834 Mackenzie and Ross (I, 428-431) print a description which includes the information that the north transept gallery belonged to the Russell family of Hardwick, and that the organ had been donated in 1708.

1846 The architectural historian Billings (1846, 63) gives two plates of the church, illustrating an 'old money box, the hollowed stump of a tree fixed in the pavement' alongside the western pier of the north arcade; he refers to the west end of the nave being 'further disfigured by a huge gallery'.

1862 Sir Stephen Glynne visited the church; his notes [roc.Soc.Antiquaries.Newcastle](#)
 3rd ser. (1908) 188-189) add some useful information to the county historians. The transepts 'appear to be private property, and remain comparatively unimproved and contain pue's'. the south transept 'had the outer walls stuccoed, and its windows of debased character'; on the west of the tower was a 'poor 3 light window'

Faculties and **other records** of Structural Work

Only those works which potentially have some relationship to the fabric of the church, or to its sub-floor deposits, are listed here. In general faculties relating to mural tablets, stained glass, moveable furnishings and works which impinge little on the fabric (ie the installation of a sound system) are not recorded. Unfortunately faculties do not appear to survive for the various works undertaken in the church during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Faculty no/date	Works
1 Feb 1663/4	(confirmed 11 June 1669) Regulation of seats (a plan showing pew arrangements of their period is kept in the vestry; it is diagrammatic, and does not show the whole building)

6754
 A gallery was erected in the north transept (VCH, 338)

1760. Dec 6 A Vestry meeting agreed to the erection of a gallery and the , making of a skylight above, although this was apparently never carried out (Fordyce II, 334)

1830
 Restoration of chancel (VCH, 338)

1848/9
 1850
 1871 1876-7

459 25 April 1906 626 9 August 1912

1915
 2078 16 July 1924 2648 17 February 1937 3191 27 June 1949
 4512 22 October 1962

4753 3 February 1965

4795 14 June 1965

4897 22 August 1966

5209 17 September 1970

5270 18 August 1971 5979 2 January 1982

Considerable repairs to the church, including the construction of a new high-pitched roof to the chancel (Fordyce 1857, II, 333)

The nave clerestory was destroyed, and replaced by the present high-pitched roof (Hodges 1896, 392); the nave walls were also stripped of plaster.

Repairs' (VCH, 338)

South transept restored (commemorative plate under south window, inside)

Erection of a lych gate

The repair and enlargement of the church (carried out 1913). The plans (by W.H.Wood) show the removal of a gallery (with its external stair) in the north transept, the addition of vestry and organ chamber. Although the faculty does not make this clear, the windows in the side walls of the chancel were renewed. Proposals to restore the clerestory and rebuild the south porch were not carried out.

Restoration of the north transept by Viscount Boyne, with the removal of the Hardwick gallery pew (VCH 339)

Improvements in churchyard

Repairs and renovations

Removal of part of the stonework of the wall of the churchyard (to install Wart Memorial)

Improvement of heating and lighting systems and new porch step.

(Archdeacons's Certificate). Conversion to oil-fired central heating & repairs etc.

(Archdeacon's Certificate) Restoration of Church

New cloakroom and toilets

Restoration of east window & repointing.

Repair of tenor bell with new fittings.

Installation of 'kneeling lady' brass in oak case, and introduction of organ screen.

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6880 2 March 1989 Major restoration of the tower.

7597 1 October 1992 Creation of ramp

7599 6 October 1992 Creation of meeting area (under tower)

7809 29 November 1993 To provide a bell-ringing chamber ceiling.

The Structural History of the Church

Sedgefield church has a long and complicated structural history. The principal published interpretation is by Hodges (1894), which the VCH writer acknowledges as the basis of his account, although he differs from Hodges on some points (eg he sees the tower stair turret as 15th century re-using 13th-

century material, rather than an in situ 13th century survival). The interpretation suggested here broadly accepts Hodges' dating for the various architectural features, but modifies his scheme, largely on the basis of fabric changes and external features which, due to re-pointing works, are much more clearly visible today than when Hodges wrote.

A church with an aisleless nave. All that is visible of this is the north-western corner, projecting like a buttress in the re-entrant angle between north aisle and tower. This could be of 12th century or earlier date; the suggestion of re-used Roman material might hint at Saxon fabric, but the character of the quoining is not distinctively of this period, and the thickness of the nave walls - c.0.80 m - would again suggest a post-Conquest date.

(ii) A western tower is added to this nave, with a stair turret on the south which survives. The north-west quoin of the earlier nave shows a cut to key in the north wall of an adjacent structure, apparently outside the line of the north wall of the present tower. Although the retention of an earlier stair turret when the rest of a tower is rebuilt seems curious, there is so much evidence that this can hardly be doubted. What the form of the remainder of this first tower - presumably of late 12th or early 13th century date - was we do not know. The fact that the aisles added c 1250 only extended as far west as the stair turret raises the question as to whether the tower may have been of an unusual slab-like form, rectangular in plan with its long axis north-south. Hodges' comment (op. cit 387) that the old tower 'was clearly of smaller dimensions than its successor and seems to have stood further to the west, clear of the line of the old west wall of the north aisle' is not readily comprehensible as it would imply a tower detached from its stair turret!

(iii) The chancel was rebuilt in the early 13th century. This is at variance with Hodges and other workers, all of whom see the chancel as a complete new build of c 1290. However, re-pointing has now revealed the remains of four narrow windows in the south wall which it is difficult to see as anything other than lancets, probably of early 13th century date; stylistically they would seem to pre-date the one original aisle window of c1250-1260, of which enough survives for its original form to be reconstructed.

Hodges' interpretation is that the nave was lengthened eastward c 1290, and the old chancel arch reset. However, there seems to be good evidence in the base of the western respond of the south transept arch, that this arch of c 1290 replaced an earlier one. Also,

14

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it seems likely that the present chancel originally extended further west: as seen in the spacing of buttresses on its south wall. The spacing of buttresses on the north wall (which cannot now be inspected closely, being engulfed in the 1913 additions) ties in with the present chancel. These buttresses might have been later additions, or alternatively the discrepancy might be explained by the 'early' north transept having had an eastern chapel, and the buttresses being spaced to allow for this.

So we are left with the picture of an early 13th century church with an aisleless nave, possibly with transepts, a west tower, and very long chancel. The rebuilding and extension of chancels was certainly in vogue in this area during this period, but even so, the proportions of this one seem excessive. To add a further complication, the fabric of the east end of the chancel is quite different. One possible - and very tentative - explanation might be that the chancel was extended to link the church and an earlier chapel that stood detached, but on the same axis, to the east. The distinctive walling of the lower part of the east end might survive from this, or, perhaps more likely, have been rebuilt after the putative chapel was removed. The fact that the chancel string course, of typical late 12th/early 13th century form, is continued round the east end, argues against the rebuilding of the end wall taking place at some later date.

(iv) Now we move into the 'accepted chronology'. Three-bay aisles were added to the nave c1250; the chancel arch would appear to have been reconstructed at the same period. This is the earliest phase of building recognised by Hodges and subsequent writers.

(v) 0290 the transepts were rebuilt, replacing their narrower predecessors, and the old chancel arch was reconstructed a metre or two east of its old position. The new transepts accommodated chapels, in the south transept dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury and the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the north transept to St Catherine. Here are one or two puzzles; the arches between aisles and transepts are obviously later than the main transept arches.

Hodges' sees the three-and-five-light windows in both transepts as being of mid-14th century date and in the 'late Decorated' style; he sees this gap of around 60 years between the construction of the transepts and their fenestration as being 'the chief difficulty in reading the architectural history of the church', but puts it down to 'the very friable nature of the stone' necessitating an early reconstruction. The five-light windows in chancel and north transept are certainly of mid-14th century type; that in the south is all reconstruction, but may have been of the same type. There seems no need to separate the three-light windows from the reconstruction of the transepts; that on the east of the north transept, with three cusped lancets under a single arch, is of a type seen at Hamsterley and Stanhope and there dated to c1300 (Pevsner & Williamson 1983, 298, 430), whilst that in the opposite wall with uncusped lancets and solid spandrels, looks earlier still. The two three-light windows in the south transept look like recent copies of that in the east side of the north transept.

(vi) Hodges' dates the present west tower to 0490, linking it to Roger Thornton, the Newcastle merchant, whose arms appear on the extant medieval bell, whose name is linked to the very similar towers at All Saints' and St Nicholas' in Newcastle.

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The central bay is similarly complex. Here the string course is set c 1.5 m above the plinth, and is interrupted by a column of rebuilt masonry containing a priest's door that has a round-headed arch with a raised stone surround with a narrow chamfer, its tooling suggesting a late-18th or 19th century date. Above the string course an irregular joint near the west end of the bay may indicate a previous window jamb; over the doorway is another relatively recent two-light window of precisely the same type as in the western bay, with its relieving arch above; to the east of the doorway is the lower part of an earlier blocked window, its jambs of the same character as those in the western bay. Here both jambs survive, showing that the opening was narrow and tall, and was presumably a lancet.

In the eastern bay, the string steps up to a high level again, to clear the head of an earlier priest's door with a two-centred arch and a continuous chamfer, now blocked; over the door, and directly above the string is the lower part of another early window. In the centre of the bay is a third two-light window; beneath its sill the string steps vertically down (the vertical section being cut back) to continue at the same level as in the centre bay, as far as the angle buttresses.

Both eastern angles of the chancel have a pair of stepped buttresses with gabled tops; immediately above these each side wall has ended in a corbelled-out pilaster-like feature, the foot of an earlier east gable. This only remains intact on the north (the gable has been further heightened, but the footstone of the earlier coping survives); on the south only the projecting block at the base of the feature remains.

The plinth and string course are continued across the east end, although the walling between them is of quite different character to that in the side walls, having many more larger and more elongate roughly-shaped blocks. In the centre of the wall is a buttress that now only rises to the level of the string, where it is topped by a 19th-century moulded block. On either side of the buttress the ends of the string seem to be mitred, as if to return around the buttress. Above the string is the great five-

light east window, with a roughly four-centred arch. The lights are trefoiled, with flowing tracery above; all the tracery is recent restoration. The outer surround is of very unusual section, with a chamfer inside a shallow square-edged sunk panel or groove; it does not look convincingly medieval, although badly decayed and clearly of some age. There is a chamfered hood; hood and window head are heavily patched with cement. The present gable, of relatively shallow pitch, has an old weathered coping (hollow-chamfered beneath), except for the finial block with its foliate cross which are clearly restoration.

Prior to the construction of the vestry and organ chamber in the early 20th century, the north wall of the chancel was divided into three bays, on this more or less equal in length, by stepped buttresses. Only the eastern bay of the wall is now exposed to the east of the additions. Here the string is again present, with above it a fourth two-light window of the same type as those on the south; directly beneath it the lower jambs, sill and stub of central mullion of a predecessor are partially exposed (and partly hidden by the addition). The wall below the string is of roughly-coursed quite small blocks; there appears to be a ragged joint just short of the angle buttress.

Above the vestry roof the upper half of the eastern of the two buttresses is seen, with a roll-moulded top like those on the south; further west the brick relieving arch above the former central window is visible above the organ chamber roof.

The Vestry and Organ Chamber are of 1912, and are built of snecked tooled stone with tooled ashlar quoins dressings. There is a chamfered plinth. The vestry has a window of three trefoiled stepped ogee-headed lights in its east gable; on the north is a projecting gable with a shoulder-arched doorway and a window of four stepped lights, with a two-light window to the boiler house below. The organ chamber has a taller but shallower-pitched gable to the north, with a square-headed two-light mullioned window with a hollow-chamfered surround, and a lower projecting section containing another two-light mullioned window and a chamfered square-headed doorway on its west side.

The Interior

The interior of the church is plastered and whitewashed, except for exposed dressings of sandstone ashlar. The arch to the Tower is of four-centred, almost Tudor form, and of two orders; the inner has a deep casement moulding, whilst the outer is simply hollow-chamfered. There are no imposts, the head mouldings simply stopping above the jamb, which has a single broad hollow chamfer. The internal face of the stair turret is flush with the inner face of the south jamb; the turret is entered by a four-centred doorway with a continuous chamfer. The internal north-western angle of the stair projection has a vertical roll-moulding of 13th-century type. The internal walls of the tower have scars high up suggesting that a quadripartite vault has been removed, springing from corbels (still extant, but somewhat inaccessible) high in the angles. The west window has a low segmental rear arch, all plastered.

The internal walls of the lower section of the newel stair are of good-quality squared stone, the individual blocks all being worked to a curve; the upper section has rendered walls apparently of rubble. The first stage chamber opens from the stair by a square-headed doorway with quite a broad chamfer; inside the doorway four modern steps lead down to the chamber floor, one of the beams of which actually projects through the wall of the newel stair. The walls of the chamber are largely plastered. The north and south windows have segmental rear arches; beneath the former a ragged patch of walling projects c 0.10 m in front of the remainder, its outline reminiscent of the top of a Gothic arch; this is clearly a section of the original wall face left standing proud when the vault was cut away, how the levels of the doorway and two windows relate to that of the vault is not clear. The inner face of the stair turret is corbelled out on two chamfered courses a little above the present floor level. The ceiling of the chamber is of recent timbers, supported by three metal girders.

A similar doorway from the stair gives access to the Ringing Chamber; there is a panelled dado and the walls are all plastered. The window in the west wall has a segmental rear arch; in the centre of the east wall is a similar recess that would appear to have been a window, now opening beneath the line of the nave roof.

The stair ends at belfry level, with a third similar doorway, in this case the dressings of the west jamb of the door, outside its chamfer, are carefully worked to a curve of tighter radius than the present curve of the stair well at this level, suggesting that the well has been enlarged. The stair well is capped by a series of eroding slabs, including one important medieval grave cover (see sepulchral monuments section).

The internal walls of the belfry carry remains of plaster, there appear to be irregular breaks between the surrounds of the belfry openings and the adjacent walling; some distance above each opening is a rough relieving arch, that on the north set noticeably off centre from the opening beneath. A recent concrete ring beam has been inserted at floor level. There are ranges of large sockets at two levels in the north and south walls, two of those in the upper series now carrying recent beams. The roof of the tower is carried by two cambered tie-beams, set north-south, with a square-set ridge and one purlin on each slope; access to the tower top is by a recent trapdoor on the south.

High in the angles of the west wall of the nave above the tower arch are two irregular projections, carrying the bases of the eastern diagonal buttresses of the tower; there are also faint hints of an earlier roof line, springing from the tops of the present nave walls.

The arcades of the Nave are of three bays, separated from the transept arches by short blocks of solid wall; they are of considerable architectural importance. The piers are each of quatrefoil plan, one shaft facing each cardinal point; the responds all have single attached shafts; piers and responds all have moulded bases standing on square plinths, moulded rings at mid-height, and 'the most sumptuous stiff leaf capitals' (Pevnsner & Williamson, 402), which retaining some remains of medieval pigment.

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The western respond of the south arcade has a roll-moulding on its south-east angle, although this has been partly overbuilt by the later west wall of the aisle; its capital is badly eroded, but grotesque masks survive on either side, that on the left (south) forming a capital to the roll-moulding. The north-eastern angle is rather disturbed, as if some projection here has been cut away. The capital of the western pier of the arcade has fine pendant foliage cut in three dimensions, somewhat damaged; that of the eastern is more elaborate with foliage and various beasts (including a pair of birds on the west which share one head). The eastern respond is very similar to the western, with a pair of grotesque masks.

The western respond of the north arcade has quite an elaborate capital with beasts, grotesque masks and foliage, all rather weathered. On the inner (south) side is evidence of cut-back masonry, projecting flush with the face of the respond, as on the corresponding respond of the south arcade. The western pier has a capital with stylised foliage, somewhat damaged; the eastern has the finest of all the capitals, with foliage, interlaced beasts, and, facing south-west, a laughing male and smiling female head; these are so well preserved that one suspects that they may have been re-worked but this may not be the case. The eastern respond has a badly-damaged capital, between grotesque heads of beasts.

The arches of the arcades are all of two-centred form; towards the nave are two orders, the inner with a pair of roll mouldings with a hollow between, and the outer with a single large roll moulding; above these is a hoodmould (quite badly decayed) with nutmeg ornament, ending in mask stops about a metre above the arcade capitals. Towards the aisle the arches are simply of two chamfered orders, without any hood.

The block of solid walling at the east end of the south arcade is 0.60 m long, as opposed to that **on the north, which is** only 0.45 m. The vertical angles of both blocks are chamfered, except the south-western of the southern, which has a roll moulding. At the east end of these blocks the arches to the transept spring from responds that have attached shafts like those of the arcade responds, but rather larger in diameter (0.27 m as opposed to 0.21 m), and with moulded rather than carved capitals, their impostes set a little higher than those of the arcade. The eastern responds of the arches are similar except that their capitals have their mouldings continued to adjacent capitals to shafts of smaller diameter (now removed) which flanked the chancel arch. The eastern respond of the north transept arch has its mid-height ring badly worn, and its base concealed by later woodwork.

The foot of the western respond of the south transept arch is of especial interest, in that the present simple moulded base of the attached shaft has been cut down into what looks like an earlier respond base; this is partly boxed in by the pewing, but it has a simple chamfer stop at its south-west corner. The corresponding base on the north has been renewed. V

The arches to the transepts themselves are of similar form to those of the arcades, except that the roll mouldings are all keeled, and their hoodmoulds do not have the nutmeg decoration.

The outer face of each of these blocks of walling has in addition an attached shaft from which springs a further arch spanning the east end of each aisle. The arch opening into the south transept is distinctly assymetric, its northern respond being c 0.8 m higher in level than the southern; both responds have the usual shaft rings and moulded capitals. The arch has two chamfered orders to the aisle, but towards the transept the inner order is chamfered and the outer moulded with a large keeled roll, under a chamfered hood. Both outer order and hood terminate with rather contrived stops against the masonry of the eastern arch of the arcade, showing that the arch post-dates the arcade pier.

On the north the corresponding arch is of similar section but rather different in shape. Its responds are set at the level but the arch itself has a short vertical section above the inner respond, but is otherwise of segmental-pointed form. The masonry of this arch is clearly built up over the broach stop at the top of the north-eastern angle of the block of walling; this arch respond has a very fat roll at mid-height, differing in character from the adjacent transept arch respond which has a more slender moulded ring.

Both these arches are set distinctly skew to the nave walls, perhaps through some error in laying out.

The internal face of the west wall of the South Aisle is set a little forward of the face of the earlier arcade respond; high up in the north-west angle of the aisle is a corbelled-out projection carrying the base of the angle buttress of the tower. The west window of the aisle has a two-centred chamfered rear arch, like all the others to the aisle windows behind plaster. The lancet west of the porch has a straight internal lintel, chamfered. The south door, now opening inside the porch, has a broad slightly-pointed arch, whitewashed over, with a single continuous chamfer; its rear arch (with exposed dressings) is of segmental form, with an infilled drawbar tunnel in the internal eastern jamb. The two south windows east of the doorway have segmental-pointed rear arches with chamfers.

At the west end of the North Aisle is a window with a two-centred chamfered rear arch; its internal south jamb is plastered, but its north jamb has exposed stonework; the chamfer of the window rear arch is continued for some distance down the jamb, which is very worn; most of the rear arch and exposed jamb look to be medieval fabric.

At the extreme west end of the north wall is the eastern roll-moulded jamb, and beginning of the curved head, of the rear arch of what was probably a lancet window. Then comes the north door, which has plain square jambs and a chamfered segmental rear arch; there appears to be a drawbar tunnel (infilled with wood) in the east jamb. The two windows in the eastern part of the wall have trefoiled rear arches with a hollow chamfer to the head but none to the jambs. Rear arches and outer jambs are of 19th-century ashlar, but there is rougher stonework within them; this roughness may simply reflect the intent to plaster, rather than the survival of earlier fabric.

At the base of the south wall of the South Transept are a pair of segmental-pointed, almost triangular, tomb recesses; each has a chamfered arch and a simply-moulded hood, containing effigies (see sepulchral monuments section); above the recesses is a chamfered set-back of c 0.15 m, below the south window which has a segmental rear arch; its exposed dressings are all 19th century. 1-lodges (1894, 390, footnote 14) calls the recesses 'new'; at first glance they look medieval work, but this may simply be due to relatively recent decay of the stonework.

There are a number of interesting features on the east of the transept; the two large windows have segmental-pointed rear arches, with chamfered heads; their exposed dressings are all Victorian ashlar, now decaying quite badly. Between the two windows are a small piscina that has a simple two-centred arch with a broad chamfer, and retains the inner half of a fluted bowl, and a rectangular aumbry with a cut-out, probably for a lock, on its north jamb. At the south end of the wall is a larger piscina, now very decayed; it has a trefoiled chamfered arch, but only retains traces of its bowl. Hodges' (1894, 389) refers to two image brackets, probably coeval with the transept, which 'the late rector' had ordered to be cut away; the piscinae and aumbry had been infilled and plastered over at the same time, but were later re-opened.

The North Transept has a panelled dado. The window at the north end of the east wall has a segmental-pointed rear arch, with a chamfered head; most of its stonework is ancient. A similar window to the south has been converted into an opening to the organ chamber and vestry, by the removal of its sill; its rear arch seems old. Between the two windows is a small round-arched recess which may have been a piscina; the head, cut in a yellowish stone, has a chamfer, and might possibly be a re-used 12th-century window head.

The large window at the north end of the transept has a slightly-distorted segmental-pointed rear arch with a chamfer to its head; the stonework of its internal surround seems old, with the exception of the sill. The internal surround of the window on the west of the transept is also largely old; its head is of slightly shouldered form, with a chamfered pointed rear arch.

On the wall is a plaque stating 'this transept was restored by Gustavus William, Ninth Viscount Boyle, A.D.1915'.

The Chancel is entered under an arch of rather distorted pointed form; its inner order has been cut away (presumably when the 17th-century chancel screen was introduced), the surviving outer order having a large roll moulding and a rather battered hoodmould with nutmeg towards the nave, and a chamfer towards the chancel. The arch now springs from a plain plastered wall, any impostes having been cut away, except for the capitals of the shafts that flanked the west side of the arch, already described (see the description of the arcades).

Towards the nave there are four large corbels set directly above the hoodmould, two about 1.5 m above its springing, and the other two on either side of the apex. The lower two are masks, and the upper two plainer.

The chancel walls are covered by panelling to a height of c 2.4 m, obscuring any ancient ritual features. The three twilight windows on the south have segmental-pointed and chamfered rear arches behind plaster; the exposed ashlar of their inner frames is all relatively recent. The internal frame of the east window is older; its arch is of segmental-pointed form, with a hollow chamfer to the arch but not the jamb; there is an internal hood, very decayed, partly obstructed by the present roof timbers (the ridge actually overlaps the rear arch itself). The single window at the east end of the north wall is precisely similar to the three on the south.

At the west end of the wall is an early-20th century arch to the organ chamber, largely concealed by the organ itself; it has a large wave moulding.

The Organ Chamber and Vestry are now entered from the north transept, from which a passage behind the organ leads to a segmental-arched doorway, with a chamfered surround, opening into the vestry itself. This has boarded wagon ceilings, and a brattished tie-beam between the two different sections (the main north-south roof and a separate part to the east). Both the north and the east windows have segmental-pointed rear arches with chamfered heads.

The Roofs

The roof of the nave is of very steep pitch, and is four bays, corresponding with the arcades below. It has large collarbeam trusses with cusped arch braces and intersecting scissor-braces above, springing from moulded stone corbels; all this is plainly Victorian work. The roofs of both aisles, with short wall-posts on corbels, and flimsy arch braces, are also Victorian, as is the diagonally-boarded ceiling of the south transept. Only the roof of the north transept is older; this is in five bays, with quite steeply cranked tie-beams, only roughly shaped, with chamfers. These are supported by quite large roughly-shaped corbels; they carry a ridge and one purlin on each slope. Each bay has two substantial rafters, which are also supported at the walls, by smaller corbels. There are further roughly-shaped corbels supporting the ends of the longitudinal timbers where these join the north and south end walls; there are even additional corbels at the south end to provide some support for the rafter adjacent to the wall face.

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The shallow-pitched chancel roof is of seven bays, having arch-braced trusses, with boarded infill above the tie-beams and trefoiled piercings in the spandrels of the braces, springing from moulded corbels; there is a moulded ridge and one purlin on each slope.

FITTINGS & FURNISHINGS

The Font stands at the west end of the south aisle; it is described and illustrated by Hodgson (1912, 215-6). The octagonal step, base and shaft are there identified as being of Tees marble (the step actually looks more like Frosterley 'marble'; base and shaft are a greyer stone), and the bowl of grey Italian marble. The fluted bowl, with a coat of arms on each face, is said to have been presented by rector Theophilus Pickering (1705-1711); his arms occur, along with those of five other contemporary families; also included are the older arms of Hoton and Thornton, suggesting that the bowl was either copied, or even re-cut, from an earlier one. The bowl does have cuts for fittings (ie a cover) which could be taken as evidence for a Pre-Reformation date. The plinth or lower step carrying the font is of sandstone, and looks of 19th century date.

There are five Bells; the fifth may be coeval with the tower, whilst the other four are by the York bell founder Samuel Smith. The inscriptions are:

(1) 'Cantate domino canticum novum'

(2) 'Laudate dominum cymbalis sonoris'

(3) 'Theophilvs Pickering D.D. rector. Te Devm Lavdamus 1707. Bryan Hamson, Martin Dunn, Thomas Smith, Richard Smith, Churchwardens'

(4) Nathaniel Lord Crewe Lord Bishop of Dvrham
1707. Anno feriae et mercatus maximae villae de Sedgefeild restorationis' •

'+Trinitate Sacra Fiat Hec Campana Beata' (accompanied by the arms of Thornton and Rodes'; it has been suggested that the tower was paid for by Roger Thornton, d.1483)

The Bellframes, probably of 1707, are of pegged oak construction, and of long-headed type with straight braces from sill to head (type 6a); they are constructed to take six bells (plan type 6.8) but the southernmost pit never appears to have been occupied (for classification see Pickford 1993)

The Church Clock was installed in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee; the mechanism, in the Ringing Chamber, bears a plaque 'W POTTER & SONS LEEDS 1897'.; an earlier clock was installed c 1741 (church guide)

The Chancel Woodwork, largely of the 1630s, is of considerable importance, 'matched only by Cosin's work at Brancepeth, and of course at Durham and Bishop Auckland' (Pevsner & Williamson, 1983, 403). The rood screen shows an eclectic mixture of styles in which an incised lozenge pattern has clearly been inspired by the Romanesque nave piers in Durham Cathedral; the canopied loft is basically Gothic, although here and elsewhere the real date is betrayed by the presence of strapwork and rustication. The same mixture of influences is seen in the choir stalls, and in the altar reredos. The panelling of the chancel walls is probably rather later, and has been linked to the rectorship of Dennis Granville (1667-1691), son-in-law to Bishop Cosin.

The Organ was donated by the Rev. Theophilus Pickering in 1707; its carved front is fully Classical, in contrast to the earlier chancel furnishings. Between 1870 and 1914 it stood at the north-west corner of the nave (church guide).

There is relatively little Stained Glass in the church; none of the medieval pieces recorded by antiquarian sources survive. There are two Victorian windows in the north aisle, and one (dated 1863) in the south; the south window of the south transept is dated 1875..

Altar Slab. On the internal sill of the west window of the north transept is a slab with two of its lower edges chamfered, identified as 'St Catherine's Chapel altar slab discovered during the restoration A.D.1915'.

In the aisles and south transept are wall-mounted Oil Lamps (late 19th or early 20th century?), on ornamental brass brackets.

Lying loose on the floor at the south-east corner of the south transept is a roughly-cut stone with a deep bowl, with a drain, cut into it; this might possibly have been part of a medieval stoup.

Three old Benefactions Boards, in a very faded condition, currently lie in the first stage chamber in the tower.

SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS

The church preserves a number of medieval monuments, the condition of some of which gives some cause for concern:

Two medieval Effigies lie in the tomb recesses in the south wall of the south transept; they are thought to date from c 1300, and represent benefactors; the male effigy is so worn as to be unrecognisable, but the female is better preserved (although in active decay; see 'recommendations'). Boyle (1892, 642) dates this effigy to the last quarter of the 14th century.

Four Cross Slabs (three within the church; for the fourth see 'churchyard' section) are known, and are described and illustrated by Ryder (1985, 112-113, plate 49):

On the north side of the chancel is an important late 13th-century slab, bearing an inscription to Andrew Stanley, first master of Greatham Hospital (and, it has been suggested, builder of the chancel) along with a cross with a chalice on the shaft and the Agnus Dei at the base; the design appears to have been inlaid in brass, now removed. Hodges (1894, p.XXXVII) gives a drawing. Unfortunately this stone is now almost completely concealed by a larger fixed heater on top of it; the condition of the surface of the monument beneath the stone is not known, but may have suffered damage.

An elaborate cross slab with a cross formed from naturalistic oak leaves, which also bears a sword and the arms of Fulford, has been re-used as one of the slabs forming the top of the newel stair, within the belfry; it can best be inspected by stepping up onto the bellframes. It is in a poor and decaying state (see recommendations section).

Part of an incised 13th-century slab forms the 33rd tread from the base of the newel stair. Hodges (op.cit) illustrates this, along with another similar slab 'in the tower' which cannot now be located.

There are also several medieval and sub-medieval Brasses:

At the east end of the nave, just south of the pulpit, are a pair of slabs: the northern is a rather battered slab with indents of a brass figure, an inscription, a shield and the emblems of the evangelists at the corners.

(2) The southern has brasses with an inscription to William Hoton d.1445 (Boyle 1892, 643) and a helmet with mantling and crest.

On the south wall of the south aisle, mounted in a wall case: Brass of a kneeling lady, with two coats of arms. An accompanying plaque identifies it as of c 1310, and the shields as of Stephen de Bastingburne and Walter de L'Isle. The brass had formerly been in the floor of the south transept; it was stolen from the church in 1969 and recovered in 1973; remounted in its present position in 1982.

(4) On the north wall of the north aisle, to the east of the north door, remounted on a wooden plaque: Inscription to Thomas Dyke d.1464 and Bartholomew Harbottle d.1474 (Boyle 1892, 643)

On the north wall of the north aisle, at its east end: A pair of brasses showing skeletons, presumably of a husband and wife, wrapped in shrouds. These are thought to be of 17th century date; Hutchinson gives a woodcut showing these set in a slab with indents for a shield, inscribed panel, and border.

There are a number of post-medieval monuments of some interest. Below the altar steps there are two large ledger stones against the south wall with coats of arms, dated 1667 and 1679; on the north, alongside the medieval slab to Andrew Stanley are a slab to the rector Jacob Clayton, d.1705, with a small brass plate, and a 1703 ledger, with arms.

There are also a number of 18th and 19th century wall monuments in the chancel, including on the north tablets to Anne Spearman, d.1821 (with a grieving female figure and coats of arms) and Mary Anne Spearman, d.1777, and on the south Rev. Theophilus Pickering d.1710 (donor of the font and organ) and Catherine Vane d.1733.

Historical Notes

900-915 During the episcopate of Cutheard 'Ceddesfeld' was purchased for the Cuthbert Community.

1085 Ulchild is referred to as rector.

10

c1240 Hodges (1894, 383-5) argues that the nave arcades at Sedgefield were built by the same architect, Richard of Farnham, who designed the Chapel of the Nine Altars at Durham Cathedral.

1794 The historian Hutchinson (III, 50-58) gives the earliest detailed description of the building:

'The church of Sedgefield is in the form of a cross; the tower lofty, and ornamented with hexagonal turrets, bearing short spires, and rising from the corner buttresses. It stands on the east side of the square; the descent into it is by several steps; the length, from tower to the screen of the chancel, is above seventy-two feet, neatly stilled, and divided by two regular side ailes; the

length of the transept is nearly equal to that of the nave. The ailes are formed by rows of three pillars, light and elegantly formed, each pillar being composed of four perfect cylinders, not placed in a square, but in a lozenge, east and west, so as to present a broad front towards the centre of the nave; the columns are belted in the middle, which greatly hurts their beauty; the bases have few members, and those of the old Saxon order, but the capitals are variously ornamented with fillets of palm branches, vine leaves, wreaths of flowers mingled with birds, and other figures, in many parts delicately pierced. The arches are pointed and ornamented with mouldings, the outward one zigzag; they spring from pilasters on the side walls, and rise from grotesque heads on the capitals of the pillars. The pulpit is fixed by the first south pillar, and the reading-desk opposite. The nave is lighted by two modern windows in each side aisle, and three on each side of the superstructure of the centre. There is a good organ at the west end, with a clock in front, which conceals the organist's seat; all neatly ornamented. The font is large black marble bason, of an octagonal form; each front richly sculptured with arms (footnote: Hoton, Hebborne, Elstobb, Lambton, Pickering), and fluted. The roof of the nave

is oak. The south end of the transept is kept as a vestry room, inclosed by a low screen of wood; it is lighted by a large window to the south, and two side windows to the east, under pointed arches; the north end of the transept is lighted in the like manner, and built up with a gallery belonging to John Burdon, esq; of Hardwick. This was anciently called St Catharine's porch, chapel or vault. The chancel is inclosed from the nave by a rich screen of tabernacle work in oak, with three stalls on each side, divided by beautiful light columns, and covered with canopies. The chancel is near 36 feet in length, to the four steps with rise to the communion-table; the space within the rails is large and commodious. The whole chancel is wainscotted with oak, in panelled work, about eight feet high, ornamented with cherubs; and there are seven handsome stalls on each side. It is ceiled with stucco work, and lighted by a large window to the east, and two on each side, under pointed arches. In the center of the east window are the arms of the See of Durham in painted glass, impaled with lord Crew's; below, on the dexter side of the window, the arms of the See single; sinister, those of Tunstall. The transepts do not appear to have been part of the original building but to have been added thereto at separate times, the one on the foundations of St Catharine's chantry. and the other of St Thomas's; or for a guild, which was instituted there.... (description of monuments omitted)

1823 Surtees (III, 26 et seq) gives a description largely following that of Hutchinson, but includes a description of a window on the east of the south transept which retained some medieval glass including the inscription '...DE HENLEE RECTOR ECCLES FECITFENESTRAM'. He states that the north transept was 'long used as a burial place for the Hotons and Freviles'.

1834 Mackenzie and Ross (I, 428-431) print a description which includes the information that the north transept gallery belonged to the Russell family of Hardwick, and that the organ had been donated in 1708.

1846 The architectural historian Billings (1846, 63) gives two plates of the church, illustrating an 'old money box, the hollowed stump of a tree fixed in the pavement' alongside the western pier of the north arcade; he refers to the west end of the nave being 'further disfigured by a huge gallery'.

1862 Sir Stephen Glynne visited the church; his notes [roc.Soc.Antiquaries.Newcastle](#)
3rd ser. (1908) 188-189) add some useful information to the county historians. The transepts 'appear to be private property, and remain comparatively unimproved and

contain pues'.. the south transept 'had the outer walls stuccoed, and its windows of debased character'; on the west of the tower was a 'poor 3 light window'

Faculties and **other records** of Structural Work

Only those works which potentially have some relationship to the fabric of the church, or to its sub-floor deposits, are listed here. In general faculties relating to mural tablets, stained glass, moveable furnishings and works which impinge little on the fabric (ie the installation of a sound system) are not recorded. Unfortunately faculties do not appear to survive for the various works undertaken in the church during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Faculty no/date

Works

1 Feb 1663/4

(confirmed 11 June 1669) Regulation of seats (a plan showing pew arrangements of their period is kept in the vestry; it is diagrammatic, and does not show the whole building)

6754

A gallery was erected in the north transept (VCH, 338)

1760. Dec 6 A Vestry meeting agreed to the erection of a gallery and the , making of a skylight above, although this was apparently never carried out (Fordyce II, 334)

1830

Restoration of chancel (VCH, 338)

12

1848/9

1850

1871 1876-7

459 25 April 1906 626 9 August 1912

1915

2078 16 July 1924 2648 17 February 1937 3191 27 June 1949

4512 22 October 1962

4753 3 February 1965

4795 14 June 1965

4897 22 August 1966

5209 17 September 1970

5270 18 August 1971 5979 2 January 1982

Considerable repairs to the church, including the construction of a new high-pitched roof to the chancel (Fordyce 1857, II, 333)

The nave clerestory was destroyed, and replaced by the present high-pitched roof (Hodges 1896, 392); the nave walls were also stripped of plaster.

Repairs' (VCH, 338)

South transept restored (commemorative plate under south window, inside)

Erection of a lych gate

The repair and enlargement of the church (carried out 1913). The plans (by W.H.Wood) show the removal of a gallery (with its external stair) in the north transept, the addition of vestry and organ chamber. Although the faculty does not make this clear, the windows in the side walls of the chancel were renewed. Proposals to restore the clerestory and rebuild the south porch were not carried out.

Restoration of the north transept by Viscount Boyne, with the removal of the Hardwick gallery pew (VCH 339)

Improvements in churchyard

Repairs and renovations

Removal of part of the stonework of the wall of the churchyard (to install Wart Memorial)

Improvement of heating and lighting systems and new porch step.

(Archdeacons's Certificate). Conversion to oil-fired central heating & repairs etc.

(Archdeacon's Certificate) Restoration of Church

New cloakroom and toilets

Restoration of east window & repointing.

Repair of tenor bell with new fittings.

Installation of 'kneeling lady' brass in oak case, and introduction of organ screen.

13

6880 2 March 1989 Major restoration of the tower.

7597 1 October 1992 Creation of ramp

7599 6 October 1992 Creation of meeting area (under tower)

7809 29 November 1993 To provide a bell-ringing chamber ceiling.

The Structural History of the Church

Sedgefield church has a long and complicated structural history. The principal published interpretation is by Hodges (1894), which the VCH writer acknowledges as the basis of his account, although he differs from Hodges on some points (eg he sees the tower stair turret as 15th century re-using 13th-century material, rather than an in situ 13th century survival). The interpretation suggested here broadly accepts Hodges' dating for the various architectural features, but modifies his scheme, largely on the basis of fabric changes and external features which, due to re-pointing works, are much more clearly visible today than when Hodges wrote.

A church with an aisleless nave. All that is visible of this is the north-western corner, projecting like a buttress in the re-entrant angle between north aisle and tower. This could be of 12th century or earlier date; the suggestion of re-used Roman material might hint at Saxon fabric, but the character of the quoining is not distinctively of this period, and the thickness of the nave walls - c.0.80 m - would again suggest a post-Conquest date.

(ii) A western tower is added to this nave, with a stair turret on the south which survives. The north-west quoin of the earlier nave shows a cut to key in the north wall of an adjacent structure, apparently outside the line of the north wall of the present tower. Although the retention of an earlier stair turret when the rest of a tower is rebuilt seems curious, there is so much evidence that this can hardly be doubted. What the form of the remainder of this first tower - presumably of late 12th or early 13th century date - was we do not know. The fact that the aisles added c 1250 only extended as far west as the stair turret raises the question as to whether the tower may have been of an unusual slab-like form, rectangular in plan with its long axis north-south. Hodges' comment (op. cit 387) that the old tower 'was clearly of smaller dimensions than its successor and seems to have stood further to the west, clear of the line of the old west wall of the north aisle' is not readily comprehensible as it would imply a tower detached from its stair turret!

(iii) The chancel was rebuilt in the early 13th century. This is at variance with Hodges and other workers, all of whom see the chancel as a complete new build of c 1290. However, re-pointing has now revealed the remains of four narrow windows in the south wall which it is difficult to see as anything other than lancets, probably of early 13th century date; stylistically they would seem to pre-date the one original aisle window of c1250-1260, of which enough survives for its original form to be reconstructed.

Hodges' interpretation is that the nave was lengthened eastward c 1290, and the old chancel arch reset. However, there seems to be good evidence in the base of the western respond of the south transept arch, that this arch of c 1290 replaced an earlier one. Also,

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6880	2 March 1989	Major restoration of the tower.
7597	1 October 1992	Creation of ramp
7599	6 October 1992	Creation of meeting area (under tower)
7809	29 November 1993	To provide a bell-ringing chamber ceiling.

The Structural History of the Church

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it seems likely that the present chancel originally extended further west: as seen in the spacing of buttresses on its south wall. The spacing of buttresses on the north wall (which cannot now be inspected closely, being engulfed in the 1913 additions) ties in with the present chancel. These buttresses might have been later additions, or alternatively the discrepancy might be explained by the 'early' north transept having had an eastern chapel, and the buttresses being spaced to allow for this.

So we are left with the picture of an early 13th century church with an aisleless nave, possibly with transepts, a west tower, and very long chancel. The rebuilding and extension of chancels was certainly in vogue in this area during this period, but even so, the proportions of this one seem excessive. To add a further complication, the fabric of the east end of the chancel is quite different. One possible - and very tentative - explanation might be that the chancel was extended to link the church and an earlier chapel that stood detached, but on the same axis, to the east. The distinctive walling of the lower part of the east end might survive from this, or, perhaps more likely, have been rebuilt after the putative chapel was removed. The fact that the chancel string course, of typical late 12th/early 13th century form, is continued round the east end, argues against the rebuilding of the end wall taking place at some later date.

(iv) Now we move into the 'accepted chronology'. Three-bay aisles were added to the nave c1250; the chancel arch would appear to have been reconstructed at the same period. This is the earliest phase of building recognised by Hodges and subsequent writers.

(v) c1290 the transepts were rebuilt, replacing their narrower predecessors, and the old chancel arch was reconstructed a metre or two east of its old position. The new transepts accommodated chapels, in the south transept dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury and the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the north transept to St Catherine. Here are one or two puzzles; the arches between aisles and transepts are obviously later than the main transept arches.

Hodges' sees the three-and-five-light windows in both transepts as being of mid-14th century date and in the 'late Decorated' style; he sees this gap of around 60 years between the construction of

the transepts and their fenestration as being 'the chief difficulty in reading the architectural history of the church', but puts it down to 'the very friable nature of the stone' necessitating an early reconstruction. The five-light windows in chancel and north transept are certainly of mid-14th century type; that in the south is all reconstruction, but may have been of the same type. There seems no need to separate the three-light windows from the reconstruction of the transepts; that on the east of the north transept, with three cusped lancets under a single arch, is of a type seen at Hamsterley and Stanhope and there dated to c1300 (Pevsner & Williamson 1983, 298, 430), whilst that in the opposite wall with uncusped lancets and solid spandrels, looks earlier still. The two three-light windows in the south transept look like recent copies of that in the east side of the north transept.

(vi) Hodges' dates the present west tower to 0490, linking it to Roger Thornton, the Newcastle merchant, whose arms appear on the extant medieval bell, whose name is linked to the very similar towers at All Saints' and St Nicholas' in Newcastle.

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It is clear that when the tower was rebuilt the aisles were truncated at their west ends. The strange retention of the earlier stair turret has already been mentioned; it is possible that further fabric either of the early 13th century (?) tower, or some intermediate medieval reconstruction was retained as well, as the body of the present tower would seem to represent at least two phases of work; its first-stage chamber appears to post-date the removal of the vaulting (which, oddly enough, none of the published sources seem to mention). These changes could of course be early post-medieval work. The nave clerestory, thought to be contemporary with the tower, was destroyed in 1850.

(vii) Post-medieval changes. The possibility of post-medieval alterations in the tower has just been mentioned; it is difficult to see the chamfered windows of the first-stage chamber as being any later than the 17th century, although they could of course be earlier features reused. Other changes of the usual type - the insertion of galleries and box pews, and windows losing their tracery and being converted into sashes - were swept away as usual by later restorations.

(viii) Restoration. Hodges' refers to the simple two-light Gothic windows ('having bastard tracery') in the side walls of the chancel as being of 'last (ie the 18th) century'; two such windows are shown in the south wall on Hutchinson's 1794 print, although these might have been genuine medieval work of c 1300. A chancel restoration is recorded in 1830; Hodges might not have been able to distinguish work of this period and that of thirty or forty years previously. The south porch looks as if it may be work of the late 18th or early 19th century.

Sedgefield, unlike other local churches, never seems to have undergone one single restoration; instead, there were a number of phases during which separate parts of the building were renovated; these are set out in the 'Faculties and other records of Structural Work' section.

The Churchyard

The church lies towards the north side of, and a little west of centre, of a roughly rectangular churchyard. This is bounded on the south and west by old rubble walls of some antiquity (certainly pre-19th century), which act as retaining walls for the ground within the churchyard which lies c 1.2 m above the roads outside. In places older material has been re-used in these walls; on the south (roughly opposite the south porch) is an area where ashlar have been re-used, including one big block with a chamfered edge, perhaps part of a monument. In the centre of the west side is the main entrance, through a lych gate dated '1906' north of this the War Memorial breaks the line of the wall. A shorter length of wall set diagonally at the north-west corner is clearly later, and incorporates two inscribed stones from previous buildings which stood here, 'COOPERS ALMSHOUSES' and 'A.M. S. MDCCXL'.

The north side of the churchyard has no boundary wall, the ground simply sloping down to join the pavement of the adjacent road; this slope is probably, in its present form, largely the product of 20th century landscaping. One block of 18th or 19th-century building, opposite the vestry, survives. The eastern boundary is also partly formed by buildings of some age, which may impinge

upon the original yard. At the east end of the south side is another block of building, now the Sedgefield Social Club. Currently this is under renovation, and the ground around its rear wall is being dug out to a depth of 4 - 5 m below the level of the churchyard. Several skeletons found here have been taken to the Bowes Museum; the Durham County Archaeologist is maintaining a watching brief. Within the churchyard, monuments (largely 19th century headstones, but with a few from the preceding century) are quite well spaced, suggesting that there has been considerable 'thinning'; there are very few to the north of the church. A large number of broken headstones now lie close to the internal face of the southern boundary wall.

The remains of an important medieval cross slab lie outside the south wall of the chancel, and have recently been pulled apart and overturned by vandals. Although Hodges (189b, plate published a reconstructed drawing (of questionable accuracy) little of the design now remains visible (see recommendations).

There appear to be few monuments of especial interest. One of the better-preserved earlier headstones, to John Rawling 'who departed this life January 1 st 1711-12...' stands a few metres south of the tower, alongside the eroded base of a table tomb of some sort. To the north-west of the tower is a pedimented monument unusually set facing south, with an inscription to FREDERICK HARDWICK, SERJEANT IN THE VIth INNISKILLING DRAGOONS who fell in the MEMORABLE CHARGE OF HEAVY CAVALRY AT BALAKLAVA on the 25th October MDCCCLIV

Archaeological Assessment

Both from the points of view of its architectural features, and of the furnishings, Sedgefield is clearly one of the most important ancient parish churches in the county. Despite the fact that the present assessment has demonstrated the survival of various phases of pre-1250 fabric, many questions relating to the earlier history of this important church and site remain unanswered. It is quite likely that remains of an Anglo-Saxon building underlie the present one.

As often, it is difficult to assess the condition of archaeological deposits beneath the floor of the church. There is certainly an underfloor heating system under parts of the building, although the only obvious duct is in the south transept; the majority of the present heating pipes are above floor level. The floors of crossing and nave are of diagonally-set stone slabs; the nave floor, oddly, is raised two steps above that of the transepts and 'crossing'. The north transept has recent wooden block flooring, extending through into the vestry. The chancel floor, again raised above this central area, is of alternating squares of black (Frosterley) and white marble, with bands of pink marble. An old painting in the vestry, probably of 18th-century date, shows a black-and-white 'chequerboard' floor in the chancel, which may be the same as the present one. The other floors are of later 19th or early 20th century date.

Deposits and structural remains of archaeological significance undoubtedly survive beneath these floors; any disturbance of sub-floor levels will require careful archaeological monitoring. As with all old churches, one would expect a multitude of pre-19th century burials beneath the floors.

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Plaster on the walls may also conceal features of importance, both in terms of earlier layers of plaster (perhaps with paintings) and structural features in the walls themselves. It is recorded that the nave plaster was stripped in the mid-19th century 'leaving the rubble walls naked' (Hodges 1896, 393); presumably this includes the aisle walls as well as those above the arcades, although this is not quite clear. These walls have since been replastered. Any disturbance of the plaster on the aisle walls should be preceded by a brief investigation to check whether earlier layers might survive. It seems likely that earlier plasters do survive in the chancel and transepts, and here any works will require archaeological recording.

Externally, as often, a perimeter drain has been cut round the church, generally floored by cobbling. It is not clear how deep this disturbance extends; its relationship with the plinths suggests that the flooring of the trench lies close to the medieval ground level, so it is possible that archaeological features, such as layers of masons' chippings associated with various building

phases, may survive beneath it. The sunk areas west of the aisles of the aisles, already mentioned, he within the walls of the end sections of the aisles before their 15th-century truncation. On the north of the north aisle, towards its east end, a low wall crossing the drainage trench appears to survive from the 18th-century gallery stair removed in 1915.

Archaeological Priorities

A more detailed survey of the fabric, in particular the tower, chancel and the eastern parts of the arcades, could well yield further information. There is a need for a good modern plan of the church; that used here is taken from Hodges late 19th-century version, the VCH resurvey having obvious errors.

The church clearly has problems with saltation and stone decay; three of the medieval monuments give cause for concern. The female effigy in the south transept shows active decay, and needs repair and stabilisation; expert advice ought to be sought here. The fast-eroding Fulford grave slab re-used in the tower is in a fairly desperate condition, and on the point of total disintegration; it might well not survive removal, even if this could be arranged. Some sort of in-situ conservation, using stone adhesive, would seem the best option at the moment, coupled with detailed recording when the stone was cleaned and repaired; it should then be covered over with some sort of material to reduce the effects of weathering.

The medieval slab outside the south wall of the chancel is in even poorer condition, although mainly through long-term weathering rather than recent decay and vandalism. The last vestiges of its complex design may merit proper recording, although it will probably be judged that too little of this remains to warrant further conservation or re-location.

Peter F Ryder September 1997

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